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DAVID STARR JORDAN





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From a portrait by Mrs. Emma Curtis Richardson

KNOWING REAL MEN

DAVID STARR JORDAN



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KNOWING REAL MEN*

IN a recent address, Professor William James has told us that the best result of a college education should be that you should "know a good man when you see him." In other words, it should teach something of the relative value of aims in life; to know good work from bad, and to ensure for ourselves, in some one direction at least, a grasp on a worthy ideal.

Our next question is this: Has your college education given this power to you? A recent writer in the American Magazine maintains that his college course never gave it to him. He did not know good when he saw it. Many others would admit the same thing if the question ever occurred to them. The writer just mentioned claims that from his college course he gained no perspective. Near things bank larger than distant ones; accidents of the day outrank the great things of the past and the future. This he finds true from every point of view. For example, as a college graduate, Mark Hanna seemed to him a bigger man than Charlemagne. Later in life when the perspective became clearer he saw the difference and wished that he had made Charlemagne's acquaintance earlier. In his geography he says the map of Indiana and that of Montana covered each a page, and the one was as large

*Graduating Address to the Class of 1908, Stanford University.

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as the other. New Jersey was as big as California and Maine as large as Australia. Later, when he crossed the Rocky Mountains, he found that the map did not do Montana justice. Its territory would make six states the size of Indiana. This didn't matter much in this particular case, but the same distortion of values appeared in everything he thought he knew. From this he concluded that his own college education was largely a failure. It did not meet Professor James' definition. He did not learn to know a good man when he saw him. He did not know things as they really are in their relations, one thing to another.

When a wise man says a true thing, we can all say it after him. We wonder why we had not said it before ourselves. We see at once how hard it is to know a good man anyhow. If you as students take this matter to heart you will see the faults in your own education; you cannot tell the best that lies about you. The graduates of other colleges have the same defect of vision, and our whole system of higher education is perverted in the same way.

There was once a banker in the days of wildcat currency who had a wonderful skill in detecting counterfeits. He acquired this skill not by studying counterfeits; he studied good money. Whatever was not good money to him was not money at all to him. It was mere waste paper, not worth even the name of counterfeit. So to detect error one must study truth; the rest is waste and rubbish. To know a good man when you see him, you must study good men. All

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short of this is bad. To know good work you must study good work. The rest is frivolity and commonplace.

This is a time to search our hearts, to size up our own promise of the future. Do you know a good man when you see him? Do you, after four years at Stanford, know what is really worth while? For example, some of you know, I presume, the best record for a quarter mile dash, for a race over hurdles, the record distance of a broad jump or a hammer throw. Some of you know a winning hand at poker, some how to tune up a rollicking song, some the manipulation of a skirt dance, some the framing of a sonnet, some the ideals of a Greek philosopher, some the art of inventing dynamos, some the theory of ions and electrons, some the measurement of electric charges, some the secret of knowing equities, some the investigation of the energies of life. Some are prepared for the next ball, some for entrance into a profession; some to break into politics, some, perhaps, to adorn the front of a tobacco store. Can you tell which of these is worth while?

There is an abundance of good work done at Stanford all the time. How many of us know the best thing, the best ten things, or any of the best ten things done by any Stanford man in the last ten years? How many of you know the best things done here at Stanford in the year just past? Can you tell which of your number is best worth while; which one will be wise, sound, clean and efficient, after the struggles

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and roundups of twenty or thirty years? Which one will then be leader of your class, not by the ballot, which is an emotional test, when it is not a selfish one, but by virtue of his crystallized character, of his own innate strength, of his being through and through a good man and a man who makes good? Sooner or later you should know a good man when you see him, do you know this same man now? If you do, it is well and good; this homily is wasted. If you do not, whose fault is it? Is it yours or ours? Or shall we modestly and justly divide the blame between our students and our teachers? Surely all share in the responsibility, as we all suffer in the failure in result.

There are many factors which tend to destroy the perspective in college life. These two bulk largest: The intrusion of the outside world—and the exaltation of side issues, the minor incidents, the byplay of boyhood, to the injury of the real business of the college.

The outside world intrudes through its vulgar standards of morality, its eagerness for money getting, its instinct for sensationalism, its chase for vulgar pleasures and unearned and unreal joys. We cannot claim in fact that the standard of the average college man is continuously higher than that of other men; that he bears a price so high that the politician and the bribe-giver cannot reach him. We cannot claim that the average college man bears a loftier standard of ideals than other men of equal native ability. Here and there is one in whom our best ambitions are made real. Such a one stands out above other college men and in

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him is our hope and our justification. But he must have been a rare man to begin with, and only the rare man can grow to be a better man after he leaves the college. A man can go through college and receive nothing of University ideals. There are many men who perform our college tasks, who meet our requirements, who pass our examinations, who receive our degrees, and yet who never know at all what it is all about. The finest poetry, the noblest philosophy, the loftiest enthusiasm, finds them dumb and cold. Their heart is in the market place, or worse, in the vaudeville theatre, not in the Academe. The outside world, through its worst phase, the call for pleasure, holds them in its grasp. Perhaps we cannot help this. The very usefulness of the college, its popularity, its respectability, all growing by leaps and bounds, are sources of danger. They appeal to the unfit as well as to the fit; they all extend invitations to the degenerate as well as to the genius. And too often the college itself is deceived in this matter. It mistakes wealth and popularity and populousness for success. Why should we care for numbers, we University men? Why should we rejoice in popularity? Why should we welcome advertising? Surely none of these helps the college, none of them strengthens the hold of the college on the lives of men.

In another way, less dangerous but still often disastrous, the outside world infringes. This is through the spirit of money getting. What will the college do for me? It must raise my salary or I will have noth-

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ing of it. Training for live work does increase a man's salary. Thus it often becomes a means to this alone. Standing all alone, this is a petty end. To be sure, some source of income is the scholar's necessity. Every man worth while should earn his own living and enough more to pay his taxes and to do his part in the life of the community. The world owes no man a living so far as I know, and those who think it does and depend on collecting it, as a rule, have a deservedly hard time. But for the rest, money does not mean success. Stanford has stood from the first for preparation for success in life, but of this success a financial surplus is only an incident—a minor factor—the smallest part of the whole.

Again, the world, as we all see it, with its traditional associates, the flesh and the devil, makes its encroachments on the academic life in other guises, some more dangerous than the hope for financial gain. College spirit, like the mantle of charity, covers its multitude of sins. Much that passes as college spirit is the poorest kind of vulgarity, the inspiration of the street, the bleachers, the saloon. Test your college spirit by this definition given by a Stanford alumnus, three years ago, and you may know whether it is genuine or not:

"In loyalty to Stanford—to the whole university—by word and deed, always, by silence, even, when speech were disloyal; in honoring Stanford people to the measure of their loyalty and no more; in building with the builders through faith in the Stanford plan; in making every best effort spell Stanford before an-

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other name; in planting no seed in Stanford ground without hope of flower somewhere; and for the sake of these things reverencing the sentiment that gave the Stanford opportunity—therein lies the beginning, but not the end, of the Stanford Spirit.”

If your college spirit is not the real thing, if it is counterfeit, it is no spirit at all. It is nothing at all but a bit of noisy shamming. There is no counterfeit money; what is not good money is not money at all. So with college spirit, what is not genuine is nothing. So with one's efforts in life; what is not honest, what is not real, has no existence.

The real Stanford—the Stanford you should know—is known by its ideals and its results. It is not the Stanford of the man on the street, of the bartender in a Cardinal saloon, nor even of the rooter on the bleachers at the great football game. The fate of Stanford depends on the moral victory of the clean mind and the stout heart.

For part of your shortcomings, if you have any, the college teachers are to blame. We have been too worldly, too little serious. We have let in too much of the outside world and introduced you too often to its agents. We have let Mark Hanna displace Charlemagne. We have made a science a railroad map in which our own line shows straight and large among feeble and meandering rivals.

The other great source of loss of perspective is in the exaltation of what we call student activities. By this we mean not the activities of the student, nor even

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the student's natural and normal by-play, but professionalism, with students as performers. Twenty years ago all of us welcomed football, track meets, and all other forms of intercollegiate athletics because it seemed to lay stress on physical betterments. We believe in sound minds and sound bodies, and the encouragement of all out-of-door sports seemed to tend in that direction. But the outcome has been very different from the anticipation. In each college two or three dozen of racers and gladiators trained out of all proportion, professionals in every sense, save that they are paid in gratitude and notoriety instead of money, practically monopolize our athletics. The rest of us as scrubs and weaklings worship from afar with noisy resonance. Our heroes of the day in the fierce light of publicity are exposed to praise or blame out of all proportion to their faults, their merits, or their achievements. Their duty is to win games, ours to show loyalty, and that by talk and yelling. And the tumult and the shouting has been organized into a concerted system as foolish as it is futile. I have never heard of a game ever won by the rooters, and it would not be honest sport if such were the case.

I believe in athletics, in sturdy, virile athletics, even in intercollegiate athletics, as means to an end—the great end of making one's brain and body work in unison. There is no training much more essential than training in physical manliness, but no part of our present system contributes much to this end, while manifold evils appear on every hand, and most notably

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in the distortion of ideals in college life. As the red-coat bully in his boots kept Thackeray from seeing the Queen of England, so does the figure of the stalwart athlete keep us from recognizing the real college men. We don't know a good man when we see him because we don't see him. Figures of exaggerated mediocrity fill the center of the stage.

It is no answer to this to say that the same conditions exist in all our colleges, that your higher education is all in the same boat, and these evils are less in the California Universities than in any other of our great colleges. If this is true, but the more is the pity, the greater the need of a new revival of learning, a new revival of religion in the true meaning of the word, in the very heart of wisdom's chosen centers.

The great Eastern colleges are feeling this. They are trying their best to exalt the real college men. They print names of honor students in larger and larger letters. It is the dig and the grind, after all, the man who does his work when the work is due, who stands for the college of the future. The athlete counts only as brains and courage are counted. Fortunately brains and courage often go with athletic skill and strength—but not always. The alumnus who does things worth while, who lives a gentle and a sturdy life, is the man who gives joy to his alma mater. Only the force of tradition, the inertia of institutions can excuse a college for granting its degrees to any inferior kind. A man is either a man or else he is not much of anything. There is nothing worth notice

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in a counterfeit. No institution can live, none deserves to live, unless from time to time it can be born again; Stanford is ready today for a new birth and a new dedication. It is for you to help give it. It is for all of us to agonize toward it and when our young University, already too old, is reborn, you will know and I shall know, and every true Stanford man and woman will know a good man when he sees him.

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